

Interim Report
Award MD-234145-16
NEH Digital Public Programs
Participatory Media
Grace Elizabeth Hale
University of Virginia
September 10, 2016

Brief Description of the Project:

Participatory Media interactively engages with and presents participatory community media from the 1960s and 1970s. Participatory Media will centralize disparate archives of community media and place them in the larger context of America's public documentary record. The project will also bring to light the development of participatory media practices, and the social and cultural history of American communities during this era. Through the discovery phase, the project will explore how to provide access to community-made, rare, and often publicly-funded moving images and their related archives; provide a model for community involvement in digital public humanities work, specifically participatory archival, curatorial, and exhibition work; and employ innovative technologies to enable digital participation on multiple levels. The final product of this discovery grant will be design documents that include user interface specifications, technology requirements, and wireframes. We expect to meet this goal and explain changes to our work plan and relationships with consultants below.

Our community partners are:

1. The Yup'ik village of Gambell, Alaska and the Alaska Center for Documentary Film; contact person is Lenard Kamerling.
2. The Puerto Rican neighborhood of New York City's Lower East Side and Young Filmmakers Foundation; contact person is Rodger Larson
3. The Appalachian community in eastern Kentucky and Appalshop; contact person is Elizabeth Barrett

This project is co-directed by Lauren Tilton and Grace Hale. Despite the fact that we have had to move many things around in our work plan, we are on track to complete the proposed work. We had to change the schedule to accommodate Lauren Tilton, co-director of this project, as she got a job at the University of Richmond and thus had to complete and defend her dissertation in the spring and move over the summer.

In our original proposal, we planned to organize travel arrangements and finalize agenda items for our initial group meeting in January and February 2016. Instead, we spent most of winter planning and hosted our first group meeting at the Yale University Digital Humanities Lab in May 8-10. The planning paid off, however, as we were able to share background reading materials, digital projects that suggest innovative ways of dealing with our challenges, and community media materials with our attendees.

For the Yale meeting in May, Jeremy Boggs and Grace Hale traveled up from Virginia to meet with key team members and advisors located there. Our core team--Lauren Tilton, Grace Hale, Taylor Arnold and Jeremy Boggs -- met with a series of Yale DH experts including Peter Leonard (Lab Director), Cathy DeRose (Public Outreach), Monica Ong (UX), and Laura Wexler (Humanities Advisor). Ryan Brasseaux (Humanities Advisor) was scheduled to attend but unable due to a last second change in his schedule. Frankie Abbot was unable to attend this meeting, and we have made plans to consult with her in October, after our site visits/ skype meetings are completed.

We decided to include fewer people in this meeting in order to facilitate a focused discussion of the humanistic and technological questions and challenges in this project. This strategy worked well, and we developed ways to address those challenges, including ideas about how to design generous interface to provide multiple points of access to our materials and how to consult with and include our community partners. We made plans to meet in New York instead with many of the people who were originally slated to come to New Haven but live in the NYC area.

In June, Grace Hale held a skype meeting with Leonard Kamerling, community liaison for the Yup'ik people on Saint Lawrence Island. She shared the results of our New Haven meeting with Kamerling and began discussing the unique challenges of working with the Yup'ik media.

In July, Grace Hale and Lauren Tilton traveled to New York City to visit our community liaison, Roger Larson, and met with Humanities Advisors' Elena Rossi-Snook and Mona Jimenez. We discussed the kinds of participation they would like to see on the site and determined which films would be digitized along with the approach towards rights and permissions. We made multiple efforts to set up meetings with Humanities' Advisors' Ben Vershbow and Dan Streibel, but they were unable to meet with us during the time period. We made plans to meet with them via Skype. While in New York, we also interviewed and filmed two key people – Rodger Larson and DeeDee Halleck – in order to develop more content for the site. We have decided to expand the project to include DeeDee Halleck's film workshop at Otisville Training School among incarcerated youth. The films are already or are in the process of being digitized.

In September, Grace will again skype with Kamerling, our Alaska community partner, to discuss Alaska materials, digitization, and site design/participation. Grace and possibly Lauren will also visit our final community partner, Elizabeth Barrett at Appalshop in Whitesburg Kentucky. In addition to discussing thoughts from the other community liaisons and the New Haven meeting, the team will investigate what work is still needed in terms of cataloging, digitizing, and rights management to facilitate using the film archives from Appalshop in a production site.

In October, we will review and incorporate feedback, ideas, materials from September Kentucky visit and prepare materials as indicated below for core team meeting. We will make sure all materials are identified and either digitized or on track to be (using non-grant funds for digitizing) and that we have text summaries.

In November the core team (Hale, Tilton, Jeremy Boggs, and Arnold Taylor) will meet in Charlottesville or Richmond to process three site visits and revisit ideas from May meeting at Yale, the New York meetings, and the Skype meetings. We will revise our thinking about users, site architecture, generous interfaces, and participatory engagement in response to information and materials gathered. We will also incorporate feedback from meetings and other work to develop the wireframes. Taylor will begin working on the proper digital

platform. We will also revise and complete work on a concrete strategy for dissemination and publicity.

In December and January, we will work on design documents and prepare for the large spring meeting in February (finalize local arrangements, hotel rooms and travel plans).

In early February, we will set the agenda for April meeting and finalize what pre-meeting feedback we will be requesting from attendees. This meeting will take place in Charlottesville Feb 23 and 24, Thursday afternoon through Friday night. We will invite the following people, in addition to the core team (Grace Hale (Commonwealth Professor, University of Virginia); Lauren Tilton (DH Lab and Postdoctoral Fellow, U. of Richmond); Taylor Arnold (AT&T and Assistant Professor, University of Richmond), Jeremy Boggs (Design Architect for the Scholars' Lab in the University of Virginia Library); Sheila Brennan (Center for History and New Media); Tom Davenport (Folkstreams); Wesley Hogan (Duke University); Wayne Graham (He was the head of Research and Development, University of Virginia Scholar's Lab but is now at CLIR/ Digital Library Federation); Worthy Martin (Director, IATH); Alexis Rossi (Internet Archive); Jon Voss (Shift); and Jeri Wieringa (George Mason University Libraries)).

In March and April, we will review, process, and incorporate ideas and materials from our February meeting. We will conduct any remaining skype meetings with Humanities advisors and meet via Skype with our three community partners.

In May and June, we will complete the final product of this discovery grant: design documents that include user interface specifications, technology requirements, and wireframes.